



## WHISTLEBLOWER INFORMATION

Whistleblowers perform an important service to the Department of State (Department) and the public when they come forward with what they reasonably believe to be evidence of wrongdoing. Federal law protects Federal employees and employee applicants against reprisal for whistleblowing. In addition, under 41 U.S.C. § 4712, it is illegal for an employee of a Federal contractor, subcontractor, grantee, or subgrantee or for a personal services contractor to be discharged, demoted, or otherwise discriminated against for making a protected whistleblower disclosure. Also, under Presidential Policy Directive 19 (PPD-19), no action affecting access to classified information can be taken in reprisal for protected whistleblowing.

### What whistleblowing activity is protected?

A protected disclosure is information that the whistleblower reasonably believes is evidence of:

- a substantial and specific danger to public health or safety;
- a violation of any law, rule, or regulation;
- gross mismanagement;
- a gross waste of funds; or
- an abuse of authority.

Federal employees may make a protected disclosure to the Office of Special Counsel (OSC), OIG, or another employee designated by the Department to receive such disclosures. Federal employees are also protected if they make a disclosure to other individuals or organizations (e.g., a congressional committee or the media), provided that the disclosure is not specifically prohibited by law and the information does not have to be kept secret in the interest of national defense or for the conduct of foreign affairs.

Employees of Federal contractors, subcontractors, grantees, or subgrantees as well as personal services contractors may make a protected disclosure to:

- a member of Congress or a representative of a committee of Congress;
- OIG;
- the Government Accountability Office;
- a Federal employee responsible for contract or grant oversight or management at the relevant agency;
- an authorized official of the Department of Justice or other law enforcement agency;
- a court or grand jury; or
- a management official or other employee of the contractor, subcontractor, or grantee who has the responsibility to investigate, discover, or address misconduct.

Disclosures involving classified information should be made in accordance with otherwise applicable laws, and individuals should consult with OIG before providing it with any such information.

### What can I do if I believe retaliation has occurred?

Federal employees and employment applicants can file a complaint with the OSC, an independent Federal agency that investigates prohibited personnel practices and can order Federal agencies to remedy whistleblower retaliation. You may file a complaint on OSC's website at <https://osc.gov/pages/file-complaint.aspx>.

Employees of contractors, subcontractors, grantees, and subgrantees as well as personal services contractors may file a complaint with OIG, which will investigate such complaints and report its findings to the Department. The Department may then order the employer to take remedial action, such as job restoration, back pay, or removal of suspensions. You may file a complaint on OIG's website at <https://www.stateoig.gov/contractor-whistleblower-reprisal>.